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Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Written statement* submitted by Organisation internationale pour les pays les moins avancés, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement, which is hereby circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[2 February 2018]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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The 2030 agenda for sustainable development goals - Poverty and the Children in armed conflicts in LDCs

The Agenda 2030 recognized that, eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. Unfortunately, many LDCs are still far away from the realization of the Goals and Targets of its Plan of Action as poverty and hunger, violence and armed conflict are widespread and keep preventing the peoples of these countries from enjoying a life in which they can fulfill their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment.

The International Organization for LDCs believes that, poverty is the major root cause of armed conflicts; meanwhile wars are a major cause of poverty, underdevelopment, and poor health conditions in the least developed countries. It is a vicious circle in which children are the most vulnerable victims of poverty, violence and armed conflicts.

Although, the Convention on the Rights of the Child is the most widely ratified human rights treaty and is further strengthened by its three Optional Protocols on the involvement of children in armed conflict, IOLDCs observed that there still a lack access to a child protection and that sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography are a daily reality in many LDCs.

The 17 Goals and Targets aim to achieve a world free of poverty, hunger, disease and conflicts should be implemented in the LDCs. All stakeholders need to act in collaborative partnership to implement the Plan of Action.

In many conflicts children take direct part in combats. However, their role is not limited to fighting. Most girls and boys are also used daily in so-called support functions that also entail great risk for their lives and immeasurable hardship.

Their tasks can vary, from combatants to cooks, spies, messengers and even sex slaves. Moreover, the use of children for acts of terror, including suicide bombings, has emerged as a phenomenon of modern warfare. Each year.

No matter their role, child soldiers are exposed to acute levels of violence – as witnesses, direct victims and as forced participants. Some are injured and have to live with disabilities for the rest of their lives.

The recruitment and use of children during conflict is one of the six grave violations identified and condemned by the UN Security Council. The six grave violations form the basis of the Council's architecture to monitor, report and respond to abuses suffered by children in times of war. Ending and preventing these violations is also the focus of the Special Representative's work and advocacy.

Most of these children suffering violence and armed conflicts try to flee. Still too often these children are perceived as unwanted interlopers rather than vulnerable victims and denied the protection they are entitled to. Indeed, in many cases, they lack access to a child protection authority, to an age and gender sensitive protection, and if necessary, age determination process, as well as to legal representation, to accessible information about their rights or about ways of seeking redress for the violation of their rights, and to support for their reintegration into society.

In **Yemen,** 7 million people are on the brink of famine and in the grips of the largest cholera outbreak in modern history. The war has killed or injured more than 5,000 children and left another 400,000 severely malnourished and fighting for their lives, according to UNICEF. Thousands of children are recruited in armed conflict, and 11 million of them, or nearly every child in Yemen, need humanitarian assistance.

In its last report UNICEF estimated that nearly 2 million Yemeni children were out of school, a quarter of them since the conflict escalated when the Saudi-led coalition intervened in March 2015. The report also reveals that more than 3 million children were born into the war and that they have been "scarred by years of violence, displacement, disease, poverty, undernutrition and a lack of access to basic services" from birth.

According to the charity, more than 50,000 children in Yemen are expected to die by the end of the year because of disease and starvation caused by the stalemated war in the country. Save the Children has warned. Consequently, an estimated 130 Yemeni children are dying every day and an estimated 400,000 children will need treatment for acute malnutrition this year.

In **Somalia**, which ranks amongst the ten poorest countries in the world, where 43 per cent of the population live in extreme poverty and over half of the labor force are unemployed. The protracted conflict between the government of Mauricio and the illegal armed groups has affected the lives of millions of children. More than 300,000 children under the age of five are acutely malnourished, and 1.7 million children are out of school.

Children are especially vulnerable to health issues, in 2016 an outbreak of measles – a highly contagious viral disease that can lead to pneumonia, diarrhoea, encephalitis which causes brain swelling, and blindness. Since September 2016, 419 measles cases have been officially recorded, 302 of which are children under five. In Somalia, measles is a major cause of death among children – but it can be effectively prevented with a simple .vaccine

In **South Sudan**, deteriorating economic situation, with skyrocketing inflation, has triggered a food security crisis. An estimated 31 per cent of the population is experiencing severe food insecurity as of December 2016, and children are among the most vulnerable. The situation is expected to deteriorate further, with 276,343 children likely to be affected by severe acute malnutrition in 2017.

The war in South Sudan has brought misery to its children. They often face hunger, rape and other violence on their long, often-solitary walks to safety. The scale of the crisis in the world's youngest country is staggering. Renewed conflict since July 2016 has deepened a humanitarian crisis that, since the violence erupted in December 2013, has displaced over 3 million people, including 1.1 million who have sought refuge in neighboring .countries. Almost 70 per cent of the refugees are children

Over half the country's children are out of school – the highest proportion of out-of-school children in the world. Children remain at risk of recruitment by armed forces and groups and, with traditional social structures damaged, they are also increasingly vulnerable to violence, sexual abuse and exploitation.

For that reasons the IOLDC recommend the HRC to set-up an open-ended working group to set up a plan of action to protect children in the LDCs in crisis, especially where is most needed, like in Yemen, Somalia and South Sudan.